

INVENTIONS OF THE NEGRO.
(Continued from page 2.)

his enlightened and liberal attitude towards the slaves.

At this point it should be borne in mind that the great industrial burden in the South fell almost wholly upon the Negro slaves, not only in agriculture and domestic labor, but in mechanical pursuits as well; so that through his experiences in field and workshop, the Negro laborer was enabled—indeed forced—to devise many a new and practical contrivance for minimizing the exactness of manual labor.

Throughout the entire South the large plantations were generally conducted on such a scale as to make them complete communities in themselves—equipped with ample facilities for supplying all their needs. Each large plantation had its complement of carpenters, cabinet makers, shoe-makers, harness makers, brickmasons, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, painters, machinists, and the like—all of whom were Negro slaves; and that they were instrumental in developing many of the improvements that mark the advanced mechanical contrivances of a later day can scarcely be doubted by anyone at all familiar with the industrial conditions in the South before the Civil War. In fact, on the Davis plantation, before mentioned, the Montgomery family devised a great variety of mechanical contrivances for use in connection with the work on the estate, which contrivances were quite generally adopted by the neighboring planters in the Mississippi bottoms, though of course,



MR. LEONARD C. BAILEY,
Inventor of Bailey's Truss.

none of these devices could be protected by a patent. It is worthy of note, however, as showing how completely a single family, even though slaves, can survive radical changes in the sentiments, customs and laws of a country, that these Montgomeries lived to see their later inventions duly patented by the Government, and their name given an honorable place in the long list of American inventors.

Although in the march of events the barriers to granting patents to Negro inventors have been swept away, the situation is still not materially changed so far as concerns its general effect upon the reputation of the Negro's mechanical genius. If he was refused a patent in ante-bellum days, he now misses the credit that should be his in the public records of inventions; for the official records of the Patent Office, as above stated, do not show whether an inventor is colored or white. And on account of this

fact the Negro race fails to receive proper credit for the many important contributions it has made to the list of American inventions.

In 1884 the writer, just then admitted into the Examining Corps of the U. S. Patent Office, had his attention called to a statement published in a Richmond (Va.) paper to the effect that no Negro had ever been granted a patent for his invention; and on inquiry among the Examiners of the Patent Office, and the attorneys who practiced before the Office, many of whom frequently came into personal contact with the inventors, it was found that more than a hundred well-authenticated cases of Negro inventions constituted a part of the records of the Patent Office. Further inquiry from time to time added to this list, which was first published for use in connection with the Negro Exhibit at the Cotton Centennial in New Orleans, in 1885; then at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893; and again at the Southern Exposition at Atlanta, in 1895.

During these years the Patent Office was called upon very frequently by editors of newspapers, and others, to furnish lists of Negro inventions, but no systematic effort was made by the office to collect such data until January, 1900; and then only at the request of the Commissioner in charge of the Government exhibit at the Paris Exhibition. The object was to make a showing, at said exposition, of what the American Negro had done in the field of invention. In pursuit of this object, the then Commissioner of Patents, Hon. Charles H. Duell, addressed a circular letter to the hundreds of patent attorneys throughout the country, to several of the largest manufacturing establishments and to prominent editors, preachers, teachers and professional men of the Negro race, asking them to furnish any information at hand concerning well-authenticated cases of patents granted Negro inventors. The replies coming in from this wide field of inquiry supplied a most astonishing array of facts. They showed that the correspondents personally knew of, and could identify by name, date and number, more than five hundred patents that had been granted by the United States to Negro inventors. They showed further that nearly as many more such persons had completed inventions of various kinds and had applied to these attorneys and others for assistance in having their inventions patented, but lacking money to cover the necessary expenses, they had finally abandoned all efforts to obtain patents for their inventions.

Another fact disclosed by the replies to the Commissioner's letter of inquiry, was that it seemed not always to be desirable on the part either of the attorneys or their clients, to make mention of the racial identity of the inventor, if he happened to be a Negro. And the objection—which seemed, in the light of the present sentimental conditions in the country, to be not wholly unreasonable—was that the commercial value of the invention might be unfavorably affected if the fact were generally known that the invention was the work of a Negro.

The list obtained, (a copy of which is herewith submitted) is necessarily incomplete; and is serviceable only in proving that the Negro has done

something—how much, it is still impossible to tell—to advance the inventive thought of his country. A study of it will show that, like other inventors, he has first sought to minimize the labor difficulties immediately before him. His agricultural employment suggested agricultural inventions, while his domestic environments suggested the next step in his advance into the broader field of inventive effort. In his investigations he has touched albeit but lightly, at times, upon nearly every subject of mechanical and chemical skill.

WHAT THE NEGRO HAS DONE.

The list shows that a considerable number of the colored inventors have appeared to set no limit either to the number or the variety of their inventions. At the head of the list stands the name of Elijah McCoy, of Detroit, Mich., who is credited with having taken out 34 patents on his inventions, relating particularly to lubricating appliances for engines both stationary and locomotive, but covering also a variety of other subjects. He has succeeded in placing his lubricators on many of the steam-car and steamboat engines in the Northwest, and also on some of the Trans-Atlantic steamers. And these are said to net him a handsome royalty. The next name in point



MR. A. F. HILYER,
Inventor and Treasury Official

of number of patents is that of Granville T. Woods, of New York, who is called the "Black Edison" because of his persistent and intelligent and successful investigations into the mysteries of electricity. He has obtained nearly 30 patents for his inventions, which cover a wide range of improvements in telegraphy, telephony, and phonography. One of his patents is for a system of telegraphing between moving trains; another for an electric railway; another for a phonograph, and still others for improvements for controlling the electric currents in telephone and telegraphic instruments. One of his telephone patents was sold to the American Bell telephone Co., of Boston, for which he is said to have received large pay. Like his co-laborer (Edison) in the field of Science, he seems to have given his life to the work, and pursues it with a pertinacity worthy of the cause. For more than twenty years his name has seldom been absent from the annual publication of American patents.

Other successful Negro inventors in the line of electrical appliances are noted as Nichols and Latimer, who pat-

(Continued on page 6.)

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